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the piece of Sheraton derivation or the more complicated joining of those of Directoire and Empire influence, the flowing lines of the structural portions tell us as clearly as anything can, that here was no designer studying in only three dimensions, but one who saw the design as a whole in the "round." It is because of this that each piece is as effectively seen from an oblique angle as it is from directly in front. The curves in each type of furniture are not dully mechanical, but would seem to be fine, firm, freehand ones full of life and strong where structural requirements dictate.

The feeling for structure is seldom violated. In only one or two cases can we point to forms where the structural effect is weakened by the desire for decorative line, and in each case we are compensated by the pleasantness of the result.

Above all, the design is controlled by adaptability to use. Every sofa, table, and chair is as practical for every-day use now as it was when it was made. The fine game table lent by Mr. and Mrs. Harry H. Benkard is an example of a piece made for a special purpose which shows a most economical and skilful design, meeting exactly the requirements of usage.

The decorative motives are comparatively few in number, but exist in many combinations. It is this very limitation of decorative motives which gives to the group as a whole its marked consistency. The carving is low in relief and so placed as to emphasize the structural quality and never to interfere with the general form. The consistency of decorative motives and methods is emphasized by their consistency of scale.

The delightful veneered treatments, beautiful in themselves, are marks which express most clearly of all the craftsman's love of his work. These exquisite details are so unobtrusive as to escape any but the eye of the connoisseur and no other feeling than affection for his work could have led our cabinet-maker to lavish care and thought upon such small details as these.

The finely chosen woods which are used—chiefly mahogany with brilliant grain-satinwood, and maple—are decorative ele-

ments in themselves and contribute in full measure to the beauty of each piece.

If further assurance of Phyfe's thorough-going craftsmanship were needed, the hidden details of construction would supply the final word. His joinery is perfect to the hair's-breadth, his braces dovetailed as well as mortised, and the dovetails joining drawer fronts to sides are sometimes as small as an eighth of an inch in the widest part. If any doubt assails one as to the authenticity of a Phyfe piece, such details of construction supply the final argument.

These are the aspects of Phyfe's work which give to any large group of it that air of naturalness and unostentatious gentility which is its outstanding characteristic. It is the work of an artist-craftsman, adequately trained in both the artistic and the mechanical media of his craft. To him, of equal importance were his design and decoration, his materials and construction, and the purposes for which these were employed. No detail was too small, no effort too great for his ready hand. And in this fact, that the hand executed what the brain conceived, lies the explanation of the poise and just taste which characterize the work of the great cabinet-makers of the past, Phyfe not the least of these.

C. O. C.

OLD WOODCUTS AND MODERN ILLUSTRATIONS

THE fashion of collecting old prints, delightful and praiseworthy as it is, has resulted not unnaturally in certain processes which were used by the elders having about them a glamour which to some extent ennobles anything done in them, whether or not that anything be itself good. Thus the words "an etching" currently stand for something, shall one say, more worthy of respect in the popular mind than the words "a woodcut." When Browning wrote and wanted by the use of one name to typify all of what was best in prints, he selected that of Marc Antonio. But today, were he alive and facing the same general problem, he would probably say Rembrandt or Whistler. The change means more than would appear immedi-

ately upon the surface, because it implies not only a shift in emphasis of desirability but even that where a generation ago the traditional fine print was an engraving, today it is an etching. The reason underlying the change is itself probably neither more nor less than that where the great commercial process for making fine reproductions in Browning's youth and early manhood was engraving—of which process Marc Antonio was the great hero—so the great commercial process for making fine reproductions in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century was etching—of which process Rembrandt and Whistler are today in America the great heroes.

The influence of the commercial upon fashions and artistic discernment has been but little dwelt upon in the books about prints, but it is really of fundamental importance for any one who would understand the swing of taste and reputation. Each of the graphic processes in which any considerable body of artistic work has been done has at some time been a common commercial process, even though it has lingered in the studios of the artists as a means of artistic expression long after it has ceased to be of importance as a commercial means of making reproductions and other printed pictures. Obvious as this is, its corollary has largely escaped attention, which is that with few exceptions the great artistic monuments of any particular process have been produced at times when that process was most important from the strictly economic or industrial point of view. Thus during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when woodcutting as a trade had reached a very low ebb, the number of artistically considerable woodcuts was almost nil, although during its commercial heyday, during portions of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and nineteenth centuries, such men as Dürer, Holbein, Daulmier, and Menzel designed their great woodcuts. Etching during the sixteenth century was only beginning to be used as a commercial process and there are very few fine sixteenth-century etchings in consequence. In the seventeenth century when it was the favorite and commonest process, it was used by Callot, Claude, Rembrandt,

Ostade, and many other notable artists. In the eighteenth century a kind of engravers' etching was in vogue among the manufacturers of printed pictures in France and Italy, and the result was, in France, such things as the Moreaus and Fragonards, and, in southern Europe, the prints by the Tiepolos, the Canalettos, the Piranesis, and the youthful Goya. The periods and places in which the fine mezzotints, aquatints, and stipples were produced coincide with curious closeness with those in which those processes were most used by the manufacturers of commercial printed pictures. The same thing is likewise true of lithography. The artistic "revival" of etching in the middle of the nineteenth century took place at exactly the time when etching had again for a moment become one of the common methods for de luxe reproduction of paintings. Pure line engraving lasted until well on into the reign of Louis XIV, but after that it was replaced by the quicker engravers' etching, and with the exception of the little group of plates by Blake at the beginning of the nineteenth century there are no great original burin engravings after that time.

Of course there is no definite and precise reason why an isolated artist at any time should not produce remarkable work in any medium whatever, whether or not it be then in current use in the "commercial studios" or factories, and such has not infrequently been the case. In the long run, however, it can be taken almost as a rule of thumb that in prints as in literature the great masterpieces are to be sought for in the medium which at the time is in the most frequent and ordinary use. There being no more reason to expect to find really great etchings in a woodcut period than there was to find masterpieces of Elizabethan English among the writings of the subjects of Queen Victoria, it is not astonishing to notice that of the two great English-speaking etchers of the period from 1850 to 1890, one was not an Englishman, and both had spent long periods of their lives in France.

Now if we survey the commercial processes which today are in greatest economic demand in the United States, it is obvious

that they are either "photomechanical," relief, or planographic, and that none of the old-fashioned intaglio processes is anywhere in current and familiar use as a means of producing commercial pictures. Of all the forms of printing surface now in use on this side of the Atlantic the relief block is far and away the commonest, whether it be produced with the aid of the camera and acids or by knives and scoops guided entirely by the human hand; and therefore, unless all experience of past time is of no use when applied to the present, we must look to the relief block as the process in which there is the greatest likelihood of finding the masterpieces of today. Naturally, set down in the middle of the current scene, we are unable to see it truly, not only for lack of perspective but possibly even more because we still to an extraordinary extent habitually think in the values of the immediately preceding technical generation. Although we can recognize that the little book illustrations of the *Dance of Death* by Holbein and the larger ones by Dürer of the *Life of the Virgin* are noteworthy prints, it is largely because they are so far away from us and so rare. But the people of their time were unable to see them in the same light, even though they did find them very interesting. The whole thing was beautifully and racily summed up by old Bernard Palissy not long after the middle of the sixteenth century, when in the opening part of his essay on the potter's art he remarks, "Many most gentle inventions are contaminated and despised for being too common among men. Thus many things are prized in the houses of princes and great lords, which, if common, would be less esteemed than so many old kettles. . . . Have you not noticed how printers have hurt painters and knowing draughtsmen? I remember to have seen the pictures of *Our Lady* done in large line by the hand of a German named Albert [i.e. Dürer], which pictures fell at one time into such lack of esteem, because of the abundance there was of them, that one paid but two pence the piece for them, despite the fact that their drawing was full of imagination." Things of our own day which are wonder-

fully fine as works of art are thought little of because there are many of them and cheap, and also because they do not look like the wonderful things of past times upon which we have been brought up. People are beginning to collect the Daumier lithographic cartoons from the newspapers of the middle of the last century and to take them very seriously; but it is extremely doubtful whether any print collectors have as yet begun to turn their attention to the cartoons in our own daily papers, although so far as drawing and pictorial quality go they are quite as good as any etchings or lithographs that are being made by our American contemporaries. The trouble with them in the eyes of the collector is that they are common and that they have a quality which is not that of the recognized prints of past times, whereas the quality of the contemporary etchings after a fashion is that of the older ones.

One of the principal reasons for the shifting of fashions and interests in the artistic prints of past periods, the sudden general discovery that certain groups of prints which have long been left to the archaeologist are after all very fine as works of art, is that men always come to understanding and true appreciation through their own experience and their own personal problems. Just as a school teacher in a small New England town for obvious reasons can and frequently does greatly appreciate the "*Courtship of Miles Standish*," it is for equally obvious reasons most improbable that she will do anything but depreciate "*Madame Bovary*." But let her go abroad and knock about in France, let her have an adventure or two which greatly moves her heart and her emotions, let her see and know the French small town bourgeoisie and have to live with it, and she will, whether or not she likes it, have to admit that *Bovary* is somehow a book which one simply cannot dismiss as was done while life was bounded by the horizons of the Connecticut Valley. Much this same kind of thing is true in the appreciation of prints—when everybody is faced by the problems of etching very few find any thing but etchings interesting or fine,

and when people are seen to be becoming more and more interested in the old woodcuts it is natural to infer that they are being faced by the woodcut (or relief print) problem.

It was these facts and the hypotheses built upon them that very largely determined the choice of a group of old woodcuts by the great masters to fill the central print gallery in the current print exhibition in the Museum. If from one point of view these old prints may be regarded as purely "collector items," from another they are of the most immediate and practical value as

precedents to which the graphic artist of today may turn for inspiration, criticism, and help in solving his own problems. More than that, they are for the reader of newspapers, magazines, and illustrated books touchstones by which he may gauge how much gold or dross there is in the printed pictures which pass through his hands—and probably if he uses this exhibition as he can for this purpose he will discover that there is more of each in the contemporary output than he has ever imagined.

W. M. I., Jr.

NOTES

MEMBERSHIP. It is gratifying to announce from time to time the number of persons who have come to the support of the Museum through its membership.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees, held October 16, 1922, the following persons, having qualified, were elected in their respective classes: Fellows for Life, Louis J. Boury, Curt G. Pfeiffer, Miss Edith W. Tiemann; Fellowship Member, Mrs. Douglas Robinson; Sustaining Members, George C. Cheney, William Hamlin Childs, William Cuff, Eli Nadelman, Mrs. Alfred P. Parker, Mrs. Howard Reakirt, Joseph Reilly, and Saul E. Rogers. The Fellowship in Perpetuity of Ralph Pingry Schott was transferred to his mother, Mrs. Cora N. Schott. Two hundred persons were elected Annual Members.

THE WING OF AMERICAN ART. This issue of the BULLETIN is a double number. To members of the Museum and to subscribers is sent a separate part, Part II, which announces a most welcome gift from Robert W. de Forest and his wife, Emily Johnston de Forest, of a building to house fittingly and well the collections of American art which belong to the Museum at present or may be added in the future. Ground has already been broken for this wing and its completion may take place at the close of next year.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS. Now that the Christmas season is approaching, our members may be glad to be reminded that the Museum offers many suggestions in the selection of Christmas gifts.

Reproductions, color prints, etchings and woodblock prints, casts and books, and the Museum calendar make excellent gifts. The small photographs, nicely mounted, serve as admirable Christmas cards; larger photographs or color prints are most suitable for framing. There are some interesting casts from objects in the Museum collections, selected as typical examples of Egyptian sculpture and of classical ornament modeled in relief on the Arretine bowls. The Museum has issued a new calendar for 1923 with twelve half-tone pictures of its best objects. The Museum sells all of these; you will find them displayed at the Information Desk at the Fifth Avenue Entrance.

JAPANESE PRINTS ON VIEW. In Room H 11 the exhibition of Japanese prints by Shunsho has made room for one of so-called primitives, that is, prints by Masanobu, Kiyomitsu, Toyonobu, and others of this school.

TEMPORARY INSTALLATION OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN FURNITURE. The English furniture, formerly exhibited on the second